



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4

ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
100 ALABAMA STREET, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-3104

AUG 21 1997

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: National Remedy Review Board Recommendations on the
Surface Impoundments Operable Unit for the
Oak Ridge National Laboratory Site

FROM: Richard D. Green, Acting Director
Waste Management Division
EPA Region 4

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. D. Green", is written over a horizontal line.

TO: Bruce K. Means, Chair
National Remedy Review Board

Region 4 has received the National Remedy Review Board's (NRRB) memorandum, dated August 15, 1997, regarding the Surface Impoundments Operable Unit of the Oak Ridge Reservation in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The Region has carefully reviewed the NRRB's input and has considered it in addition to other input received on this project from the Department of Energy (DOE), the State of Tennessee, the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (SSAB), and other stakeholders.

In brief, the NRRB found that the DOE proposal for this operable unit did not adequately demonstrate the cost effectiveness and environmental benefits of the preferred alternative (off-site disposal). The NRRB further recommended that DOE "expeditiously" develop a "comprehensive site-wide management plan." However, the NRRB further noted that this comprehensive plan should not delay timely and appropriate action for the Surface Impoundments Operable Unit.

The Region fully understands the points made by the RRB. The Region initially concurred with a proposal from the DOE for an alternative that would have resulted in the construction of an on-site waste cell within the operable unit. The Region's support for this alternative was based upon an evaluation of the threshold and balancing criteria of the National Contingency Plan (NCP). However, information was incomplete at that time concerning the NCP's modifying criteria: state acceptance and community acceptance. The three parties to the Oak Ridge Reservation Federal Facility Agreement (FFA) agreed to embark upon a major public outreach effort, through the SSAB, that resulted in the formation of the "End Use Working Group," made up of local citizens and representatives of the SSAB. The purpose of this effort was to solicit more public input prior to the FFA parties publicly noticing a preference for a remedial alternative.

The End Use Working Group began meeting in January 1997 and produced a set of recommendations for the Oak Ridge Reservation Bethel Valley area, including the location of the surface impoundments, titled "Recommendations for the End Use of Contaminated Lands in the Bethel Valley Area of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory." The SSAB also produced a set of recommendations for the Surface Impoundments and issued a letter stating their concurrence with the preferred alternative presented in the final proposed plan (off-site disposal). Copies of these letters and recommendations were included in the remedy selection briefing package provided to the NRRB for the July 30, 1997, review of this project.

In preparation for the release of the final proposed plan, the Region had many discussions with the DOE and State regarding consideration of the modifying criteria (state and community acceptance) in addition to the other remedy selection criteria. It was the determination of the Region that the off site disposal option, which has the support of the State and community, was the best alternative considering all of the nine criteria for remedy selection. The DOE decided to issue the proposed plan for formal public review with off site disposal as the preferred alternative.

The Region has reevaluated its support of the off-site disposal remedy in view of the input received from the NRRB. However, after consideration of all of the NCP's criteria - including state acceptance and community acceptance - the Region has concluded that we should reaffirm the appropriateness of our decision that the off-site disposal remedy (with an on-site disposal contingency should a "Centralized Waste Management Facility" be approved and constructed under a separate action) represents the best remedy. The need for timely action, the State's strong opposition to other alternatives, the likelihood of reductions to the total cost based upon our experience with other DOE projects, and the support of the SSAB were all significant factors in reaching this decision.

The Region appreciates the efforts of the RRB in their review of this project. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Mr. Jon Johnston, Chief, Federal Facilities Branch, at 404/562-8527, or Camilla Warren, Chief, DOE Remedial Section, at 404/562-8519.

cc: S. Luftig
T. Fields
B. Breen
J. Woolford
E. Cotsworth
J. Cunningham